

Chapter 10

Using Health Psychology to Inspire Entrepreneurial Innovation in Dubai

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ABSTRACT

Being an entrepreneur encompasses a number of traits. Used as an “umbrella term,” it constitutes self-motivation, leadership, resilience, proactivity, creativity, and a sense of light-hearted preparation to deal with potential failure in different aspects of the startup. These individual traits are prevalent in most people; however, it is the combination of them, alongside sound physical health and access to social resources that allows an entrepreneur to enjoy success in due time. Psychological theory and practice may inform techniques in developing and facilitating what it takes to succeed as an entrepreneur. Specifically, health psychology explains how individuals’ unique biological, psychological, and social factors, as informed by biopsychosocial theory, together produce adaptive or maladaptive behaviors. To translate this for the context of entrepreneurship, only an individual, who is physiologically healthy or otherwise manages their physical condition well, might enjoy entrepreneurial success.

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INTRODUCTION

Being an entrepreneur encompasses a number of traits. Used as an “umbrella term”, it constitutes self-motivation, leadership, resilience, proactivity, creativity, and a sense of light-hearted preparation to deal with potential failure in different aspects of the startup. These individual traits are prevalent in most people, however it is the combination of them, alongside sound physical health and access to social resources that allows an entrepreneur to enjoy success in due time.

Psychological theory and practice may inform techniques in developing and facilitating what it takes to succeed as an entrepreneur. Specifically, health psychology explains how individuals’ unique biological, psychological, and social factors, as informed by biopsychosocial theory (Engel, 1997), together produce adaptive or maladaptive behaviors. To translate this for the context of entrepreneurship, only an individual, who is physiologically healthy or otherwise manages their physical condition well, might enjoy entrepreneurial success. In addition, having the cognitive capacity to motivate oneself and not be defeated by inevitable failures in life and business, and is assertive in receiving social support or is surrounded by emotionally supportive and resourceful peers, will facilitate success in a business start up.

While psychological factors such as resilience, cognitive capacity to process competing cues and tasks, self-efficacy, and ability to motivate oneself on a regular basis may be obvious trait requirements for a successful entrepreneur, biological and social aspects are less obvious. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of our population is living with a long-term condition today, and comorbidity with a number of conditions is similarly prevalent. As for social factors, research has demonstrated a significant benefit of social support on quality of life, happiness, and longevity.

This represents one aspect of how health psychology can be used to support entrepreneurship in Dubai: by directly considering the individual behind the start up. The alternative approach is to use health psychology to inspire novel ideas in Dubai’s pool of business start-ups, specifically with the intention of maintaining and improving biopsychosocial health and quality of life in Dubai. Both of these avenues for intervention will be discussed in this chapter.

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